

Political campaign signs

Political campaign signs are signs, posters or handbills promoting or publicizing candidates for public office or issues to be voted on in a general or special election. The content of political campaign signs is limited to matters scheduled for election and does not include general political positions or issues.

Illegally-posted signs are a safety hazard

Carelessly placed signs can reduce driver visibility, distract drivers' attention from the roadway, or force pedestrians and bicyclists into dangerous areas close to the road edge or onto difficult terrain alongside the road shoulder.

Traffic and pedestrian safety is a high priority for the Road Services Division, and our crews are quick to address safety concerns related to illegally-posted campaign signs.

Posting regulations

Violations waste taxpayer dollars

Each year, King County logs many complaints about improperly posted campaign signs. Taxpayer money is wasted when road crews must spend time removing signs before mowing or performing other activities, and when county investigators are required to spend time following up on sign complaints.

Extra work for campaigns

Most campaigns make sure their workers are aware of campaign sign-posting

regulations. In their enthusiasm for their candidate or issue, however, some campaign workers or private citizens may overlook the regulations or engage in seemingly harmless pranks concerning the opposition's signs. In addition to wasting taxpayer money, depending on the size or nature of the posting violation, campaigns may have to dedicate valuable staffing resources to respond to the event.

Where campaign signs are allowed

Political campaign signs may be displayed **on private property** with the property owner's consent. Any such signs, posters or handbills must be removed within ten days following election day, per King County Code (KCC) 21A.20.120C1.

Although the campaign volunteers may

agree to remove any sign, the property owner is ultimately responsible for compliance with the removal policy.

Where signs are not allowed

KCC 21A.20.040 and 21A.20.120C2 prohibit any signs, posters, handbills or other advertising devices, including political campaign signs, on the county's right-of-way, public easements, public property or utility poles with a few exceptions. King County Code allows some signs when they have been specifically permitted for traffic management and

safety purposes. Real estate open house directional signs are permitted by KCC 21A.20.120D2. The agent or seller must be on site and the signs must be located outside of vehicular and bicycle lanes. Other directional signs may be permitted by special-use permit per KCC Chapter 14.30 Permit System for County Property. The county may remove and dispose of any other signs illegally posted in the road right-of-way.

The road right-of-way

This includes the paved road and a strip of land, usually on either side of the road, that is reserved for shoulders, drainage ditches, sidewalks, traffic signs, electrical traffic control boxes, utility lines and future road expansion. Exact right-of-way areas vary in width, and boundaries may not be possible to identify without detailed legal maps and a formal survey. Property owners may not know the exact right-of-way boundary and may have maintained, landscaped or fenced this area. King County often receives complaints about campaign signs inadvertently placed on the public right-of-way. When in doubt about the location of the right-of-way boundary, post the campaign sign on private property with the owner's consent, well past the point of uncertainty.

What to do about illegally-placed signs

On private property

- Property owners can contact the campaign headquarters and ask to have the sign removed.*
- Advise the campaign about the error so it is not repeated.
- The King County Road Services Division has no authority over signs posted on private property.

On the road right-of-way in unincorporated King County

Call **Road Services** 24x7 at 206-296-8100 or toll-free at 1-800-527-6237.

Report sign problems not related to road right-of-way issues

- Call the campaign headquarters.*
- To file a formal complaint about damaged or stolen political campaign signs in unincorporated King County, contact the King County Sheriff's Office at 206-296-3311. Include such facts as license numbers, names and witnesses to the theft. **Do not call 911.**

How to retrieve signs removed from the right-of-way

- Campaigners can call Road Services at 206-296-8100 or toll-free at 1-800-527-6237 to find out how to retrieve signs maintenance crews have removed.
- Private property owners should contact the campaign headquarters to replace a sign that has been vandalized or stolen from their property.

** King County Elections at 206-296-1565 will have the campaign headquarter's number, if it is not listed on the sign.*



King County

Department of Transportation
Road Services Division

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